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Dare to Decorate

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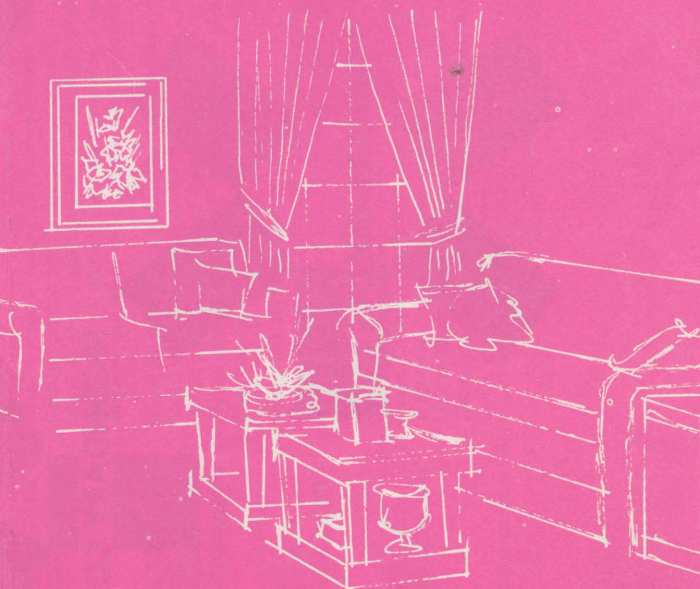
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DARE to DECORATE

U. S. Department of Agriculture

South Dakota State University

Cooperative Extension Service



By Carol Jo Thompson, Extension home furnishings specialist

Since the beginning of time man has been creating music, poetry, literature, art. . . . Decorating your home is a creative experience. As well as being comfortable, inviting and convenient, your home should please and express you and your family.

To decorate, one must deal with a variety of elements and principles of design, texture and color. Each of us has an innate desire and ability to appreciate, but what we appreciate is a matter of training and experience. Good taste is developed gradually. Once you comprehend the elements and principles and practice using them, you will develop an eye that recognizes the difference between good and poor taste. As with all creative methods of expression, most people must practice to acquire proficiency . . . few of us have a natural talent for decorating.

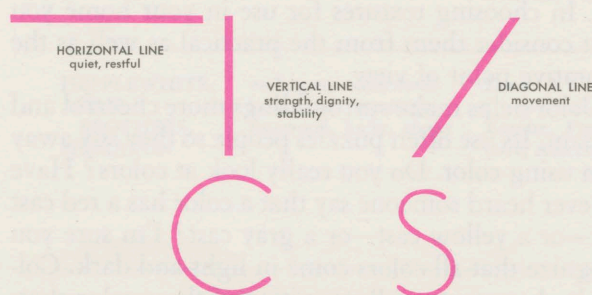


Figure 1. Lines

Design has numerous definitions. For our purposes we will refer to design as the selection and organization of elements which go together to create beauty.

Line is the first element we will consider. There are two basic lines—straight and curved. Straight lines include horizontal, vertical and diagonal. Curved lines include C curves and S curves. (Fig. 1)

Shape comes as a result of line. Repetitious shapes used together create harmony. Contrasting shapes used together create confusion. Transitional shapes have the ability to bring two opposing shapes into harmony with one another. (Fig. 2)

Furniture built using straight line has a tailored appearance and tends to be masculine in character. Curved-lines tend to be softer, more graceful and feminine in character. All straight-line objects or all curved-line objects in a room tend to be rather uninteresting . . . the room becomes either too severe or

too frilly. Straight-line shapes can be softened by the use of some curves and curved-line shapes can be strengthened by the use of some straight lines.



Figure 2. Shapes

To have integrity, all parts of a room must **harmonize**. This can mean that you have harmony of idea, harmony of texture, harmony of line and shape, harmony of size and/or harmony of color. Harmony creates an impression of unity.

Furniture that is too small or too large for a room and pictures that are too large or too small for a wall, look out of place. The reason for this is they are out of **proportion**. One should buy furniture, pictures and accessories of a size that will enhance the total room. Large rooms call for large furnishings, small rooms—small furnishings. There really isn't any formula by which decisions can be made . . . it's a matter of keeping proportion in mind when making choices and planning pleasing space relationships.

Balance creates stability, equilibrium and steadiness. Balance can be achieved by using two objects of like weight or by using a light-weight and a heavy-weight object. To balance objects of equal weight, each must be placed the same distance from a center point. Balance a light- and a heavy-weight object, by placing the heavy object closer to the center than the light object. (Fig. 3) Similar objects placed so they are equidistant from a center point is known as **formal balance**. Formal balance is quiet, precise and dignified. Formal balance (bissymmetrical) can be achieved by using identical objects or by using objects that that appear similar in weight. (Fig. 4)

A second type of balance is **informal** or asymmetrical. This is more subtle and gives one more opportunity for creativity. Informal balance is achieved by placing objects so they appear balanced but nothing is centered. A heavy object is placed to one side of the center. Lighter weight objects are then placed between the heavy object and the center. Usually the

objects are placed fairly close together. It is acceptable for the lighter objects to cross the center or for all the objects to be on one side of the center. It takes a little more practice to become accomplished in asymmetrical creation. The end result is usually more pleasing to the style of living used by most American families however. (Fig. 5) A third type of balance—radial—might be used but isn't often seen. This is when things are balanced equally around a center object—similar to spokes around a wheel. This would adapt nicely to some of the more modern home designs. (Fig. 6)

Rhythm is the element that helps lead the eye easily and pleasantly around a room and through the house. It creates the amount of movement a room portrays. Rhythm is attained through repetition, progression and connected or continuous line movement. Repeat objects, colors, textures or ideas. Use **odd** numbers for repetition **not even**. Vary the size of objects rather than using items of equal size. Streamline your rooms—eliminate as many irregularities as possible and create a smooth design.

Centers of interest or points of **emphasis** within a room enable us to draw special attention to certain features or accessories. These centers can be created through varied means: by placement or grouping of objects, by use of color contrasts, by use of ornamentation, by use of unusual or contrasting sizes, by shapes or lines, or by having a background space that is less conspicuous than the objects to be used in the space. These may be combined and used as one center of interest, used separately or in varied combinations. It

Figure 3. Light and Heavy-weight Objects

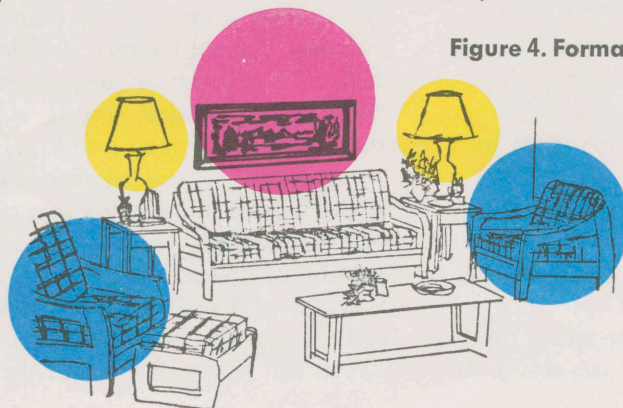
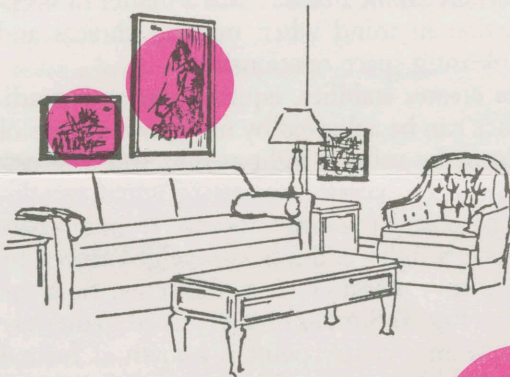


Figure 4. Formal Balance



Figure 5. Informal Balance

is wise to have **one dominant center of interest** in a room with several subdominant centers rather than numerous dominating points of emphasis. Whatever you use as interest points should be suitable to the room, simple and beautiful. "TOO MUCH" becomes ugly.

Texture is decoration. It is the roughness or smoothness, the regularity or irregularity of the pattern, the distance between the high points and low points, the shape of the peaks and valleys of a material. Texture affects our sense of touch and affects light reflection thus affecting the object's appearance. Texture determines the ease of maintenance of a surface. In choosing textures for use in your home you must consider them from the practical as well as the decorative point of view.

Color helps make surroundings more cheerful and pleasant. Its use often puzzles people so they shy away from using color. Do you really look at colors? Have you ever heard someone say that a color has a red cast to it—or a yellow cast—or a gray cast? I'm sure you recognize that all colors come in light and dark. Colors also have texture. Recognition of three color characteristics—hue, value, and intensity—will help you have a better understanding and gain more enjoyment from color.

Hue is the term applied to the color name. The very first thing you learned about color when you were a child was the hue. To **really** enjoy color one must go further than mere recognition. In addition to hues we have the colorless families or neutrals. These include white, black and gray. They do not belong to any hue.

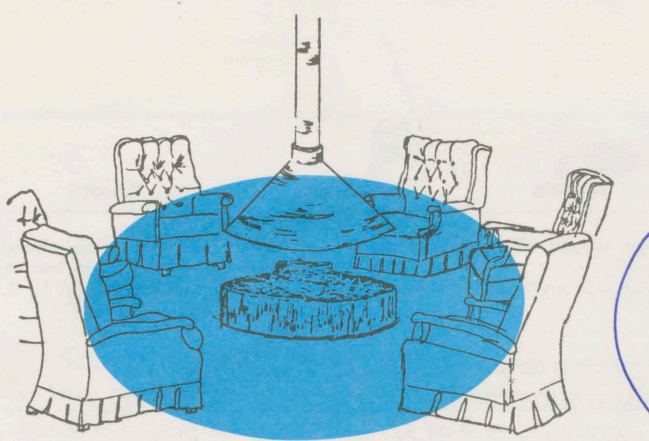


Figure 6. Radial Design

Value is the amount of dark or light in the color. Light value colors, such as pale pink, mint green or cream, are referred to as **tints**. Dark value colors such as burgundy, forest green or gold are referred to as **shades**. On a value scale black would go at the bottom and white at the top. If you turn the scale upside down so you have black at the top and white on the bottom, it looks top heavy. Thus in decorating it is wise to use darker hues in the lower part of a room and lighter hues near the top. Another point to remember is that sharp value contrasts are more conspicuous than slight value contrasts. Sharp contrasts are forceful and dramatic . . . they immediately draw your attention.

Intensity (chroma) refers to the strength or purity of a color. Two colors may be the same **HUE** and the same **VALUE** but differ in **INTENSITY**. That is, one color might be a strong red (bright) while the second is a weak, grayed red (dull). Intensity is the dimension of color which enables a color to whisper, to shout or to speak using well-modulated tones. The intensity of a color is changed by the addition of the colors complement. When mixed in certain proportions, complementary colors will completely destroy one another producing a neutral gray. Between complete neutrality and total intensity there are many degrees of intensity.

Texture frequently tends to change the intensity. Rough surfaces make a color appear duller and softer than when the same color is used on a smooth, shiny surface.

The three **primary colors** include red, yellow and blue. From these three, all other colors are created. The **secondary colors** are orange, green and purple. A color made up of a primary and a secondary color is called a **tertiary color**. These include blue-green, yellow-green, yellow-orange, red-orange, red-purple and blue-purple. (Fig. 7)

From the hues and neutrals, various color schemes can be developed. None is particularly better than another. Your preference and current trends will probably serve as partial guides in your choice. A little knowledge of some of the suggested schemes might help you choose an interesting color combination. To keep the total area interesting and attractive, remem-

ber the many other factors affecting the appearance of colors.

A **monochromatic color scheme** is when you use various shades, tints and intensities of one hue.

A **complementary color scheme** is when you use various shades, tints and intensities of hues which are opposite one another on the color diagram (e.g. Blue-Orange, Green-Red, Yellow-Purple, Yellow-Green, Red-Purple, Blue-Green, Red-Orange, Yellow-Orange, Blue-Purple).

A **split-complementary color scheme** is when you use one hue and the hues on either side of its complement, (e.g. red, with yellow-green and blue green). You do not use the complement.

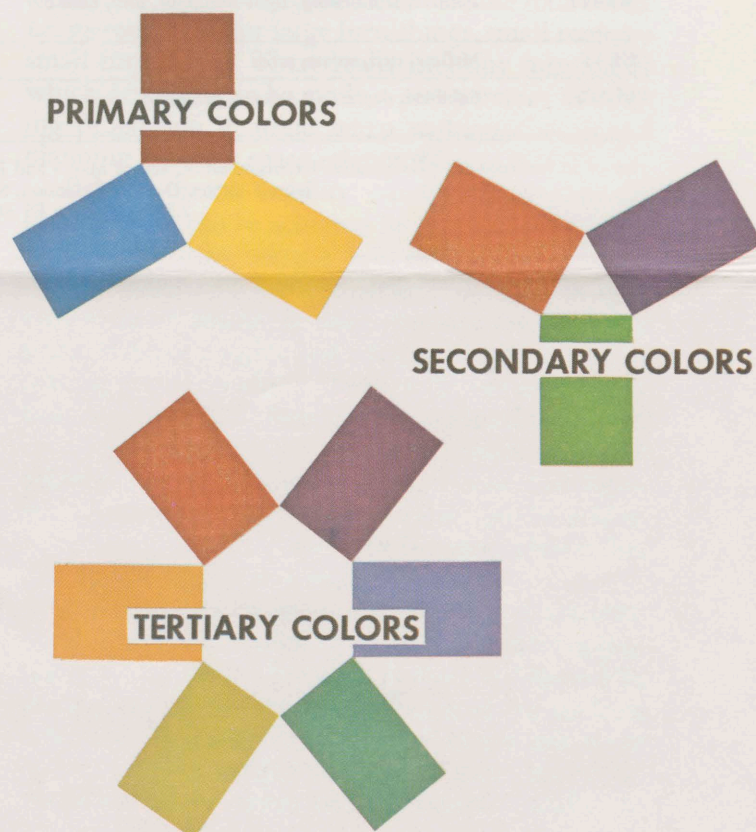
An **analogous color scheme** is when you use hues that are side by side or closely related such as a primary, secondary and tertiary color, (e.g. blue, green and blue-green).

A **triad color scheme** is a combination of three colors from the standard color wheel that form an equilateral triangle, (e.g. blue-green, yellow-orange, red-purple).

An **accented neutral color scheme** is when you use small accents of bright color in predominantly neutral areas.

Some colors are warm in feeling (reds, yellows and oranges) and others are cool (blues, purples and greens). In general it is said that warm colors should be used in north and east rooms while cool colors

Figure 7. Colors



should be used in south and west rooms. This is not to say you **shouldn't** use the colors any other way . . . it is merely a guide—a starting point. For example, let's say you have blue and green bedroom furnishings and you've moved into a home with bedrooms on the north and east sides. You're not going to throw everything out and start over. Instead you help create visual warmth by bringing yellow, red or orange into the room in the form of curtains, draperies, floor coverings, wall coverings, accessory items, or other.

Color can also help or hinder the lighting of an area. Generally speaking light colors reflect light, while dark colors absorb light. The amount of light in the room will have some affect on the total mood,

you should consider this in choosing color. Recommended levels of reflectance in the home are 60-90% for ceilings, 35-60% for walls, and 15-35% for floors. A light meter will be an aid to you as you plan colors for various areas of your home. (Fig. 8)

While lighting is affected by the colors you choose to put in a room, the artificial lighting you put in a room will also affect the colors. In addition to incandescent lighting there are several kinds of fluorescent lighting in use in homes. Each of these different light sources affect colors differently. Nearly everyone has noticed the color distortions created by mercury vapor street lights . . . similar color distortions are caused by other lights. The chart (Fig. 8) will give you an idea of how colors are affected by artificial lights.

Figure 8. How Light Affects Color

Light Source	Affect of Light on Color	Color Family
INCANDESCENT	Gives an orange cast, makes most of these colors rich and glowing	Red
	Darkens all of these colors, giving them a yellow or brownish cast	Green
	Gives a yellowish or greenish cast to most of these colors, dulls or darkens the deep colors	Blue
	Gives an orange cast, makes these colors bright, rich, warm	Pinks and Tans
	Warms and enriches all of these colors, giving them a slightly brownish cast	Yellow
NATURAL WHITE FLUORESCENT	Makes all these colors appear rich, clear and vibrant	Red
	Darkens these colors giving them a slight gray cast	Green
	Makes all these colors appear clear, rich and bright	Blue
	Lightens and warms most of these colors—gives a yellowish cast to cocoa and gray shades—gives a gray cast to mauve and rose tones	Pinks and Tans
	Gives these colors a clear yellow cast	Yellow
WHITE FLUORESCENT	Gives a yellow cast to lighter shades—fades and dulls the darker shades	Red
	Makes these colors bright and clear with a slight yellow cast	Green
	Makes green-blues greener, lighter shades clearer and grays darker shades	Blue
	Lightens and warms most of these colors—gives a yellowish cast to cocoa and gray shades—gives a gray cast to mauve and rose tones	Pinks and Tans
	Gives these colors a clear yellow cast	Yellow
WARM WHITE FLUORESCENT	Makes light shades clear and bright—gives a slight yellow cast to brighter reds and a slight brownish cast to darker reds and rusts	Red
	Makes lighter shades bright and clear and darker shades deep and warm	Green
	Makes all of these colors richer, lighter, clearer	Blue
	Brightens and gives a warm, soft yellow cast to all these colors	Yellow
DELUXE WARM WHITE FLUORESCENT	Makes all these colors appear bright and rich	Red
	Makes these colors deeper, richer, warmer with a slight yellowish cast to the lighter shades	Green
	Warms and deepens most of these colors	Blue
	Enriches and brightens all of these colors	Pinks and Tans
	Makes these colors appear warm and deep with a slightly orange cast	Yellow
SOFT WHITE FLUORESCENT	Gives a pinkish cast to all these colors and intensifies reds	Red
	Grays or gives a bluish cast to these colors	Green
	Grays or gives a slightly violet cast to most of these colors	Blue
	Brightens and deepens these colors, giving a reddish cast	Pinks and Tans
	Deepens and gives these colors a pinkish-brown cast	Yellow
DELUXE COOL WHITE FLUORESCENT	Gives all these colors a clear, cool appearance—slightly darkens some of the deeper shades	Red
	Makes these colors clear and light	Green
	Makes all of these colors appear lighter	Blue
	Makes these colors appear warm, clear and rich	Pinks and Tans
	Enriches, clarifies and warms most of these colors	Yellow
COOL WHITE FLUORESCENT	Grays and darkens most of these colors	Red
	Grays all of these colors, darkens yellow-greens and clears blue-greens	Green
	Slightly grays or darkens all of these colors	Blue
	Grays and darkens all of these colors	Pinks and Tans
	Slightly grays and darkens most of these colors	Yellow
DAYLIGHT FLUORESCENT	Grays, deadens, or gives a violet cast to these colors	Red
	Brightens, clears and gives a blue cast to all of these colors	Green
	Makes all of these colors appear cool, bright and very blue	Blue
	Grays and dulls these colors, giving a slight blue cast	Pinks and Tans
	Dulls, grays and darkens all of these colors	Yellow

Source: GTE Sylvania, Inc., *Color Is How You Light It*, New York, New York

After study of the previous material you are ready to start work on your home decorating. Don't be afraid to try something different. Let your home express the real you—don't make it a carbon copy of what you saw in the store or what your friends have.

Decorating need **not** be totally one period style

throughout the room or throughout the house. "Variety is the spice of life" so if you want, go "eclectic" (a mixture of styles). This way you can make use of things you have and/or enjoy a variety of different styles. A few suggestions as to what looks most appropriate with some of the many furniture styles available might help you. (Fig. 9)

Figure 9. Furniture Styles

Furniture Style	Woods and Trims	Related Furniture Styles	Metals	Fabrics	Colors
LOUIS XIV OR XV	mahogany, cherry, walnut, fancy veneers, oak, ebony, marble, gilt	Louis XIII, Italian Renaissance, Georgian, Chippendale, Italian, Mediterranean, Victorian	silver, gold, bronze, copper	damask, silk, brocade, velvet, leather, tapes-tries	white, gold, pearl gray, silver, rose, light green & delicate blue
QUEEN ANNE	walnut, some mahogany, lacquered pieces in red, black, yellow and blue	Wm. & Mary, Chippendale, Georgian, American Colonial, Victorian	brass, silver, iron on country pieces, bronze	needlepoint, brocade, heavy velvet, printed linens, crewel, silk, damask, brocatelles	off-white, cream, pearl tones, gray-blue, mustard, soft crimson-reds, turquoise, various greens
CHIPPENDALE	mahogany, some walnut	American Colonial, Louis XV, Queen Anne, Early Georgian, Some Oriental, Victorian	silver, brass, bronze, pewter	rich, beautiful silks & velvets, printed linens & cotton, tapestry, tool- ed leather, closely stitched embroidery	soft, vigorous & virile colors, green, turquoise, rich yellow, gray-green, brown, yellow-brown, lacquer red, gold
HEPPLEWHITE, ADAM BROTHERS, SHERATON	mahogany, satinwood, tulipwood, sycamore, rosewood, holly, ebony	Louis XVI, American Colonial, American Empire, French Direc- toire, American Federal	brass, silver, ormolu, introduced	gold & silver brocades, striped or flowered silks, rich smooth deli- cate fabrics, small de- signs, some leather & horsehair	softer & lighter white, gray, blues, mauves, corals, yellows, gilt, & green. Pastels & blue- green favored by Hep- plewhite, green by Adam, blue by Sher- aton
ENGLISH REGENCY	mahogany, rosewood, ebony, lacquered wood, varied ornamen- tal woods	Duncan Phyfe, French Empire, French Direc- toire, Hepplewhite Sheraton, Adam Bros., American Federal, Vic- torian	brass, some silver, ormolu	silks, satins, damasks, stripes, small pattern, geometric designs	stronger & brighter than previously, dark colors popular, sharp contrasts & strong ac- cents, gold & gilt Chi- nese pink, bright yellow apricot, lavender, salmon, bold stripes
VICTORIAN	black walnut, mahog- any, ebony, rosewood, heavily carved, marble used widely	Chippendale, Queen Anne, Louis XIV or XV, American Federal, Regency	gilt, metal, black, iron, heavy, silver- plate	horsehair, plush, bro- cade, satin, chintz, flower or grass prints	tomato red, dark green much gilt
FRENCH PROVINCIAL	walnut, beech, fruit- wood, oak	Italian Provincial, American Colonial, all 18th Century styles, all modern styles	pewter, wrought iron, copper, tole	range from fine silks to handmade woolens & checkered gingham, prints, quilted fabrics, plaids, embroideries of all kinds	bright red, blue, brown, warm green, yellow, tan, cream
EARLY AMERICAN (COLONIAL)	oak, pine, hickory, ma- ple walnut, beech, ash, cherry, elm, cedar, ap- ple, cypress, pearwood, mahogany introduced in 1710	French Provincial, Queen Anne, Chippen- dale, Sheraton, Hepple- white, Duncan Phyfe, Directoire, all modern styles	pewter, wrought iron, brass (late in period), silver (late in period)	homespun, cottons, handwoven wools & worsteds, linens, India prints, damask, bro- cade, crewel, drill cloth, velvet, brocatelle, serge (late in period)	reds, blues, greens, yel- lows, white, pearl tones, blue-gray, brown

Furniture Style	Woods and Trims	Related Furniture Styles	Metals	Fabrics	Colors
AMERICAN FEDERAL	white walnut, maple, mahogany, pine, cherry, beech, yellow poplar, apple, pear, red gum, satinwood, rosewood	Duncan Phyfe, Hepplewhite, Sheraton, Adam Bros., English Regency, French Directoire, Empire	brass, ormolu, silver	silk, chintz, printed linen, lace, Chinese embroidery, brocade, satin velvet, taffeta, tapestry, plush, crewel, needlepoint, haircloth, leather, "linsey woolsey" plush	soft blues, grays, olives, stronger colors late in period as well as U. S. flag colors
MODERN	mahogany, walnut, oak, maple, fruitwood, teak, acrylic, ABS, melamine, polyester, polyurethane, polystyrene, polypropylene	Early American, French Provincial, all moderns, Italian Provincial	wrought iron, brass, copper	cotton, linen, acetate, silk, wool, fiberglass, polypropylene, nylon, acrylic, blends, furs, plastics	all colors

Color creates moods. Because of this and the various emotional characteristics of people we find that while one person enjoys a certain color very much

another is very uncomfortable with it. Thus in a family one must be quite careful when choosing colors.

Figure 10. Moods of Color

Hue	Characteristics	Symbolism
RED	Positive, aggressive, exciting, fatiguing in large quantities	Symbolizes primitive passions and emotions, associated with rage and strife, courage, virility and sex
ORANGE	Increases tension, irritates, vibrant	Spicy, associated with fall
YELLOW	Most luminous, least popular, pleasant, energizing	Cheerful, gay, lively, emblematic of the sun, sacred in China and western Christian civilization
BLUE	Cool, serene, passive, tranquil	Aloofness, signifies sincerity, hopeful
GREEN	Cool, serene, passive, tranquil	Represents faith, immortality and contemplation, freshness, youth, peace
PURPLE	Stately, rich, pompous, impressive	Courage, virility, nobility, spirituality, death, sadness
WHITE	Positive, stimulating, light luminous, airy, delicate	Purity, chastity, innocence, truth, surrender, the color of mourning in China
GRAY	Mellow, rich, sedate, sober	Passive resignation, humility
BLACK	Subdued, depressing, solemn, profound	Sorrow, gloom, death—indicates secrecy, terror, evil in western civilization, smartly formal

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